

VILLAGE OF ANGEL FIRE
Wildfire Protection Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, July 28, 2014 at 1:00pm at Village Hall

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Rick Sprott called the meeting to order at 1:02.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge was called by Chairperson Rick Sprott

III. Roll Call

Voting members Present: Mark Rivera, David Hartson, Scott Jones, and Rick Sprott

Members Excused: John Goodson, Mike Clemmons and Dan Rakes

Council Liaison: Brinn Colenda

Staff Members and Technical Advisors: Jay Mitchell and Arnie Friedt (NMFD)

Guests: Christy Germscheid, Bob Lagasse, Paulette and Pat McCarty, Jim Marlin, Gary Tucker, Jane and Charles Fielder, Gabe Weinstein, and Don Clark

A quorum of voting members was declared.

IV. Approval of Agenda

Hartson moved to accept, Mark Rivera seconded, passed unanimously.

V. Approval of Minutes, Last Meeting:

Jones moved to accept minutes, Hartson seconded, passed unanimously.

VI. Old Business

A) Report on July 22 Council Work Session and Meeting – Hartson and Mitchell

Sprott provided review of historical work and dates, original CWPP and ordinances, reviews in April 2013 through a first reading with Council of amended ordinance in July 2014.

Council Work Session: emphasizing that current draft of the ordinance is a proposal that will go through a well-understood process. Ahead in putting together is a 20-year plan to complement the ordinance, including input from the Ruidoso Forester and city management on regulation, policy, outreach, manpower, and programs. Current date for second reading is at Council Meeting (public hearing) on September 9th.

B) Committee Next Steps; Education & Outreach (E&O) – Sprott

1. "Official" Ordinance Process Meetings/Hearings – Mitchell

As discussed, Second Reading is scheduled for September 9 Council Meeting that will also constitute the public hearing. Committee education and outreach activities will be in addition to the legal ordinance process.

2. Possible Committee initiated E&O – Sprott, Jones

Chamber Meeting, AAFPO Board Meeting, 2nd Public Forum, Monthly Bill insert, Chronicle venues. Other possible groups include the Rotary and clubs. Open call for suggestions to improve the Public Forum. Open calls for topic-specific working sessions with concerned citizens.

Discussion of website contents, general consensus to proposed materials, including Wildfire Protection Information (online Research resources), Fire Mitigation/Prevention/Education (helpful websites), AF Wildfire Protection Committee Calendar.

C) Wildfire Program Fund and program Budget – Mitchell

1. Fund Balance from 2013-14 Village billed \$310,000. \$62,000 not collected (in process). Carryover estimated at \$240,000.

2. Fund Revenue and Budget for 2014-15. 20% goes to Solid Waste Department for their Wildfire Protection activities, 80% to Wildfire Fund. Big items include \$157,000 in personnel (Forester, heavy equipment operator/CDL), 50% of grapple truck driver (Tom, half year), \$20,000 for emergency evacuation signage, chipper and grapple truck maintenance and debt burden. Fund balance from 2013 will be used for grant-matching and capitol purchases.

D) Village Forester Hiring Process and Timetable – Mitchell

Rivera delivered job function / capabilities / salary range estimates document for hiring before his retirement. Hiring Process has to follow on after ordinance review, adaption, approval. Requires a mandatory job. Need to provide a sustainable job rather than part-time contractor work. Sprott questioned need to wait since an ordinance is in place now and most of job relates to overall Wildfire Protection Program as described in CWPP. Committee wants to hire a Forester ASAP.

E) Slash Pickup and Disposal Actions and Dates – Mitchell

Village increased staff effort to 6 days a week, +/- Chipper up and running as of last week. Working legal requirements to utilize the air curtain burner. Budget item for heavy equipment operator gives us staff for Chipper and Air Curtain operation. That will increase disposal capacity when filled.

F) Builder Meeting Update – Sprott and Mitchell

Sutton (president of the Builders organization) advises including landscapers and excavators. Village Manager agrees he will schedule a date.

VII. New Business

A) Committee Member Changes, Add Mark Rivera & Excuse Brian Bredthauer – Sprott

Arnie Friedt was moved from voting member to technical advisor at his request.

B) Possible Committee "Assignments" - Sprott

Research: Mark Rivera proposed. Others consider concept and voice interests.

C) Visit from Ruidoso Administrator/Forester – Sprott & Mitchell

Area familiarization, then consult and work with Village, Committee, and then possible participation in 2nd Public Forum. Mitchell will contact Ruidoso Village Administrator to begin arrangements.

VIII. Questions from Audience Members

1. Responses to Questions from July 21 meeting about Little Bear Fire. Arnie Friedt from feedback from NMFD in Capitan.

- Did the Little Bear Fire cross into Ruidoso? LB Fire didn't get into Ruidoso. The White fire touched Ruidoso but in minor way.
- Was Ruidoso funding used outside of the city limits? All WUI funding applied for and granted to the city has been used inside Ruidoso city limits. Lincoln County has used grant funding outside of Ruidoso.
- When did Ruidoso adopt its Wildfire Protection Ordinance? First CWPP was 2004, and ordinance is assumed to be approximately at the same time.
- How much thinning has been done and for how much? Lincoln County has thinned 7,000 acres using grant funds of 9.6 million. Otero County 3678 acres for 4.8 million.
- Has any of the thinning within Ruidoso been tested by wildfires? Not yet ... treatments outside of Ruidoso were tested; some were successful, some not. Factors include where the treatment was (aspect, slope, etc.) and how intense the fire was when it arrived at the site.

2. Bob Lagasse: concern that Insurance salesmen are confident they can insure, but underwriters are refusing to cover. Answer: try to get underwriters at next Public Forum. Concern that only Ruidoso has the ordinance style that the Committee is recommending. Answer: some communities use ordinances, some Cities farm responsibility out to homeowners associations (covenants where covenants were required to meet city thinning requirements). Some communities have "best practices" that implement a State Statute. Only 10% of 7000 communities in the WUI have active programs. Sprott asked Lagasse if he would assist Committee by gathering information on insurance issues; Lagasse agreed.

3. Pat McCarty: concern about safety and efficacy of thinning. Ordinance treatments may be too aggressive and dangerous or too expensive. Hayman fire case study by national experts described 60,000 acres burned in one day. Brings some new science – several areas of the fire were treated, but entire area still burned. Asking for report links to be posted to the website. Answer: Links will be on Committee website. Hayman Fire occurred under worst case

conditions of low fuel moisture, drought, and high winds. Report indicated that such fire would be expected to overpower any treatments. There are benefits in less extreme fire to slow or reduce damage using good planning and policy.

4. Paula McCarty: Why doesn't the ordinance cover aspen trees? Answer: definitions exempt the aspens except under specific cases (e.g. under your eaves). Would you consider a dead, down & diseased (3Ds) and ladder fuel for ordinance instead of a Zone 2 / Zone 3? Answer: We need a set of baseline standards that are thoughtfully applied by the Forester-specified prescription. The ordinance says case-by-case basis. Ordinance alternatives will be considered.
5. Jim Marlin: Favors committee momentum. Hears the concern about the big fire coming in, but the houses themselves are potential ignition sources: Answer: You are entirely correct. We think that another way to look at Zone 1 and Zone 2 is in protecting the community from this type of threat from personal property.
6. Gary Tucker: Concern is requirements around driveway requirements – is it 30 feet? Over-clears the narrow lots. Answer: It's 15 feet from center for Zone 1 requirements. That means actions like limbing up and raking out needles. Trees can stay. There is no minimum driveway width in the Fuel Treatment Ordinance proposal.
7. Charles Fiedler: Suggests that subjectivity opens us up to lawsuits and asks for an ordinance that is less contentious to ensure community support. Calculates we need to take out more than a million trees even if the village was flat and that the Village can't handle it. Argues that a healthy forest definition isn't clear. Recommends meetings on weekends to allow more people to attend. Answer: We will look at the information you've presented, and discuss. We like the idea of public discussions on weekends. Also might be productive to do topic specific sessions.
8. Jane Fiedler: If it is subjective, what's going to happen when I want a building permit? Answer: The current ordinance required new construction lots to be thinned to the current fuel modification standard. The Village pays a professional to make an honest assessment – subjectivity in this case means experience and judgment, not a method to favor one citizen over another. That will not change if the ordinance is revised or a forester is hired.

IX: Adjournment:

Jones moved to adjourn, Hartson seconds, passed unanimously. Adjourned at 3:36 PM.

Passed, Approved and Adopted on this 11th day of August 2014.


Scott Jones, Secretary


Rick Spratt, Chairman

ATTEST:


Terry Cordova, Village Clerk

